

PRESS RELEASE

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

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Media Contact:

Kit Werbe
Public Information Officer
Indianapolis Department of Public Works
Office: (317) 327-4669



CITY CELEBRATES COMPLETION OF HIGH-PRIORITY SEWER PROJECT

Septic Tank Elimination Program brings sewer service to more than 500 homes and eliminates standing water in area streets

INDIANAPOLIS – A \$20 million sewer project is now complete and will replace failing septic systems with sanitary sewers on the city's southeast side. More than 500 homes will receive sewer service as a part of the city's Septic Tank Elimination Program (STEP) in the neighborhood near Franklin Road and Southeastern Avenue.

In addition to sanitary sewers, residents in the Franklin/Southeastern STEP project also received drainage improvements to eliminate standing water in streets and flooding in yards during wet weather along with 3 ½ miles of bike lanes.

"Bringing sanitary sewers to area neighborhoods is a high priority for the city," said Mayor Greg Ballard. "Removing residents from septic systems is very much a quality of life issue. In this case, we were also able to incorporate drainage improvements and bike lanes, which just help to make our city more livable as well."

Under the direction of Mayor Ballard, the Department of Public Works (DPW) has re-prioritized planned sewer projects and pushed the schedule forward to eliminate more septic tanks than any other time in the city's history. Through STEP, the city anticipates bringing sewers to 7,000 homes from 2009 through 2013.

The Franklin/Southeastern STEP project is a part of the larger Southeastern Corridor Phase I project, one of the largest STEP projects the city will complete. A Marion County Health Department survey of the Southeastern Corridor area found that more than 50 percent of residents had failing septic systems in need of repairs.

"Many people don't realize that all septic systems eventually fail – they have a limited life. When these systems do fail, human waste can leach into groundwater, backyards, neighborhood ditches and streams," DPW Director David Sherman said. "Installing sanitary sewers through our STEP program is one of the most important investments the city is making in our neighborhoods."

Septic systems are linked to high *E. coli* bacteria counts in many neighborhood streams and ditches during dry weather, when children are most likely to play in them. Some septic tank owners get their drinking water from private wells, which can be vulnerable to contamination by *E. coli* bacteria.

The Franklin/Southeastern STEP project is part of the city's Clean Streams-Healthy Neighborhoods program, which is designed to curb raw sewage overflows into rivers and streams, address chronic flooding, eliminate failing septic tanks and improve quality of life in Indianapolis neighborhoods. STEP projects are funded

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through sanitary sewer user fees. Homeowners pay a one-time connection fee for the construction of city sewers and monthly sewer charges.

For information on when a STEP project is planned for a particular area, please visit www.indy.gov/STEP or call (317) 327-8314.

For more information on the Indy BikeWays Plan, please visit www.sustainindy.org/bikeways.cfm.

Mayor Ballard launched SustainIndy and created the Office of Sustainability in October of 2008. Both represent an innovative enterprise aimed at delivering long-term cost savings to the city, building the local economy, improving our quality of life and enhancing our environmental and public health. Its efforts are designed to aggressively move Indianapolis forward in making it one of the most sustainable cities in the Midwest. For more information, visit www.sustainindy.org.

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